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Experimental Music In Higher Education: Toward A Pedagogy Of Creativity

Philip Melancthon Snyder V
University of South Carolina

EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC IN HIGHER EDUCATION: TOWARD A PEDAGOGY OF CREATIVITY

by

Philip Melancthon Snyder V

Bachelor of Music
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2013

Master of Music
University of South Carolina, 2015

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Accepted by:

Jennifer Parker-Harley, Major Professor

Greg Stuart, Major Professor

Rebecca Nagel, Committee Member

Joseph Eller, Committee Member

Cheryl L. Addy, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

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ABSTRACT

Experimental music is rarely taught in higher education music programs but it could nevertheless be useful for providing students a methodology through which to develop creativity. This document seeks to find common ground between the seemingly disparate worlds of classical music and experimental music in pursuit of revealing the usefulness of experimental music practice for musicians trained in the classical tradition. In seeming contrast to classical music, experimental music values include process, indeterminacy, and non-subjectivity. This document shows that these aspects, despite seeming exclusive to experimental music, are in fact integral to all music. This document will also discuss writings on the use of experimental compositions in teaching young, novice musicians, showing that these works can benefit both untrained and professional musicians. This document concludes with side-by-side analyses of four pieces of experimental music with four coinciding pieces of standard flute repertoire, discussing the benefits of viewing the latter through the lens of the former. These arguments will reveal the shared space between experimental music and classical music and show that they can influence, inform, and benefit each other.

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INTRODUCTION

The pedagogy of creativity is a slippery subject. Creativity is a term that is sometimes placed in contrast to technique forming a binary pair of skills which musicians should supposedly cultivate during their studies: musicality and facility. Such bifurcation can be problematic, generating contradictions which can be seen to annihilate one side or another. The music student is thus thrust into an exploration of an aesthetic nature in pursuit of personal ideals and techniques for dealing with these contradictions and moving past duality. This is the process I refer to as the pedagogy of creativity. It is a view of teaching that resonates with Jacques Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* that purports that, according to the introduction by the work's translator, "knowledge is not necessary to teaching, nor explication necessary to learning."[1] This formulation of pedagogy is a process undertaken not only by the instructor but also by the student. It is a process of equality and shared experience.

According to Adam Tinkle, questions of pedagogy are "questions of epistemology and ethics: what is (musical) knowledge? How is it (best) transmitted? And what are the ramifications, especially in terms of agency and power, of different modes of knowledge transmission?"[2] In this document, I will use experimental music as a lens through which to explore these questions, not in pursuit of their answers but simply to engage in the process

[1] Ranciere, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*.
[2] Tinkle, "The Expanding Universal."

of exploring a pedagogy of creativity. Experimentalism provides a particularly useful lens for this because it is a similarly slippery subject. A paradoxical subject perhaps requires a paradoxical lens for best viewing. As teaching must navigate the appearance of duality, experimental music must also navigate a double life as an established genre and an open mindset. Tinkle might say that experimental music is both "skilled" and "deskilled" or that it moves past such binary distinctions. As Eleni Ikoniaduo writes in her book, *The Rhythmic Event*, "Perception is revealed as a middle way, as much outside the grasp of the perceiver as that of the perceived, and participating in both. It turns into a rhythmic flutter subsisting in between actual forms, individuals, and entities but irreducible to their intentions and properties."[3] The pedagogy of creativity is a searching for this middle way of perception.

This document is inspired in part by my journey with these questions. I will discuss my personal experiences throughout the paper in order to provide examples and underscore the individuality of pedagogy. At certain points in my education, I felt surrounded by history texts, articles, pedagogical literature, etudes, recordings, and teachers all of whom seemed to have definitive but conflicting answers to the many questions inherent in the creation of art. Sometimes, music seemed to tap into the dynamic energy of events and at other times it seemed to concern itself with absolute ideals. As a music student in higher education, I sought a way to justify these seemingly conflicting mindsets.

The "middle" mode of thinking was present in the methods of some of my teachers, but experimental music helped to give me a lens through which to see it and a vocabulary to use in an always-already-changing process of defining it.

[3] Ikoniadou, *The Rhythmic Event: Art, Media, and the Sonic*.

Chapters 2 and 3 will discuss sources that paint a picture of experimental music and its values. Chapter 2 will focus on historical perspectives, leaning heavily on the work of Jennie Gottschalk's *Experimental Music Since 1970* borders on exhaustive. Chapter 3 will discuss writings about utilizing experimental music and practices to teach non-musicians.

Chapters 4 and 5 will define the values and teaching of experimental music within classical music. Chapter 4 will search for common ground between the two. Chapter 5 will build on this platform by discussing its potential use as a pedagogy of creativity. Chapter 6 will demonstrate this by analyzing four pieces of experimental music alongside four pieces of standard flute repertoire.

CHAPTER 2

EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC VALUES

Experimental music is a genre of art music composition and performance that emerged during the 1950's. The body of work discussed in this document is largely agreed to have originated with the compositions, writings, and teachings of John Cage.[4] Jenny Gottschalk defines experimental music most clearly in *Experimental Music Since 1970*, writing that this music explores "indeterminacy, change, experience, research, and non-subjectivity" carried out through "activities including composition, performance, improvisation, installation, recording, and listening."[5] It is sometimes referred to as post-Cagean or American experimental music. There are, as with any significant art movement, various sub-categories of experimental music that this terminology fails to accurately address. For the purposes of the arguments that follow, a broad definition will suffice.[6]

Furthermore, the term "experimental music" has referred to several movements throughout music history that do not pertain to this document's topic. For example, the term is sometimes used in reference to a practice of early electronic music, including the work of Pierre Schaeffer, Pierre Boulez, and Edgard Varèse.[7] The work of these composers was synonymous with "experiment" because sound had not been composed using machines prior to their research. This music certainly shared common values with Cage, but this

[4] See Nyman, Gottschalk.
[5] Gottschalk, *Experimental Music Since 1970*.
[6] See Gagné, *Historical Dictionary of Modern and Contemporary Classical Music*
[7] Mauceri, "From Experimental Music to Musical Experiment."

document will not address the electronic movement directly. Some writers, including Cecilia Sun[8] and Michael Nyman,[9] have also included early minimalism as a branch of experimental music. Similar to early electronic music, minimalism has a shared origin with experimental music but has recently come to inhabit a distinct niche.

I will offer an additional disclaimer regarding the terminology I have chosen. There are always potential downfalls to establishing historical perspectives for something that began less than 100 years prior to the present. This movement is continually developing. The meanings of words used here may soon be obsolete. Additionally, any attempt to apply monikers to this body of work may fail to define what it does or how it acts because these pieces do not necessarily aim to be concrete. I additionally acknowledge the fact that this one word – "experimental" – cannot describe the subtle nuances and sub-genres that have developed and are developing as part of this movement.

The easiest way to approach this subject is to discuss specific individuals and pieces. Perhaps the most historically accepted composer and leader of experimental music is John Cage. According to Jennie Gottschalk, his composition *4"33"* is "a key example from the repertoire."[10] According to Cage, the piece "should make clear to the listener that the hearing of the piece is his own action — that the music, so to speak is his, rather than the composer's."[11] This inclusive mindset would prove to generate other aspects of experimental music that inform the genre. As Gottschalk says,

[8] Sun, *Experimental Music*.
[9] Nyman, "Experimental Music : Cage and beyond."
[10] Gottschalk, *Experimental Music Since 1970*.
[11] Frieling et al., *The Art of Participation 1950 to Now*.

> 4’33” anticipates and traces five conceptual arcs that cross each other pervasively in experimental music. These arcs do not mark boundaries—those are always going to be pressed and crossed—but they wind through various regions of work as recurring features: indeterminacy, change, experience, research, and non-subjectivity.[12]

Cage himself discussed the use of the term “experimental music” in an article in *The Score and I.M.A. Magazine* in 1955 and an address to the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) conference in 1957 both titled “Experimental Music.”[13] A primary point in his writings makes a distinction between experiment before the “finished” artwork and experiment *as* artwork. As he writes in his 1957 article, “It is claimed that any experiments that are made precede the steps that are finally taken with determination, and that this determination is knowing, having, in fact, a particular, if unconventional, ordering of the elements used in view.”[14] In other words, Cage claims that the classical process of composing music involves an experiment that leads to a determined goal. Cage goes on to say,

> Where, on the other hand, attention moves towards the observation and audition of many things at once, including those that are environmental—becomes, that is, inclusive rather than exclusive—no question of making, in the sense of forming understandable structures, can arise (one is tourist), and here the word

[12] Gottschalk, *Experimental Music Since 1970*.
[13] Cage, *Silence*.
[14] Cage.

> "experimental" is apt, providing it is understood not as descriptive of an act to be later judged in terms of success and failure, but simply as of an act the outcome of which is unknown. What has been determined?[15]

Cage locates the experiment not in the forming of something which will eventually become an object but in *the object itself*. The experiment in "experimental" music is *itself* the goal. Because of this experiment-as-object approach, the object is different for every piece and every instance thereof. Perhaps Cage would accept each unique instance of performance as a valid interpretation of a composition. Cage's "observation…of many things" adopts an inclusive attitude toward music performance.

To use a clichéd, representative example of the distinction Cage makes between classical music and experimental music, consider Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5* and Cage's *4'33"*. Certainly, Beethoven underwent an experimental process through which he selected his form, musical themes, harmonies, rhythms, and cadences. These experiments yielded a rather specific score which is to be interpreted into a rather specific performance. *4'33"* in contrast consists of three movements each of which instructs the performer to remain *tacet*. The object of the piece then becomes the environment in which it takes place. The material of the artwork unfolds in a process which is itself the material. The audience, the room, and the ambient noises of the environment are the sounds that occur in Cage's composition. It therefore opens up to a wide array of outcomes which are highly unique each time the piece is played. The most important of these outcomes is the reflexive relationship between the listener and the performer who are one in the same. This audience/performer is

[15] Cage.

constantly hearing the sounds being made in the room and modifying their actions based on what they perceive. This in turn changes the sound of the room which then changes the actions of the performer in a loop. This process is the main material of *4'33"*. Whereas Beethoven's experiment happens *before* the piece is performed, Cage's experiment *is* the piece *being* performed. I make this distinction not as a way to alienate classical music or experimental music but to describe a Cagean ontology of music performance. As I will later show, the differences described here exist only at the surface and, rather than generating difference, allows for thinking about music from a variety of perspectives.

Adam Tinkle, in his dissertation *The Expanding Universal: Participation and pedagogy in experimental music*, reframes Cage's ideas using the conceptions of "participation" and the "skill/deskilling dialectic." His definition of "participation" is "desire for and movement towards the inclusion of larger numbers of people, or previously excluded people, in the making of art."[16] For example, the inclusion of the group of people previously thought of as the audience as active participants in the performance event. In *4'33"*, the audience and their environment are included as participants although the finer points of Tinkle's argument raise questions surrounding this idea. Tinkle's "dialectic" is "… one potential analytic tool for charting what appears to me to be a tide that swept up numerous experimental musicians, across disparate communities…"[17] He says,

> …experimental music's history can…be read in terms of a dialectic of skill-deskilling-reskilling. I unpack this triad as (1) a traditional regime under which it

[16] Tinkle, "The Expanding Universal."
[17] Tinkle.

> is expected that music is played by musicians, defined by their musical skill, which is closely bound to Western art music training; (2) a demand, made by trained musicians, for the removal of all traces of such training, skill and tradition, often linked to the demand for unrestricted, egalitarian participation; and (3) a synthesis: new notions of skilled music-making, demanding the invention of new pedagogies to inculcate those skills.

Tinkle traces this trajectory across music history beginning in the late 1900s. At the turn of the century, Western art music critics were fascinated by skilled performance, virtuosity, and nigh levels of technical training. Tinkle purports that Cage and his colleagues ushered in an era of participatory music-making that deskilled music into something anyone could do regardless of preparation or training. He traces this deskilling to Black Mountain College and the New School which gave rise to pieces like *4'33"*, *0'00"*, Happenings, and Fluxus events. The pendulum swung back in a subsequent era of "reskilling" as musicians like Pauline Oliveros became interested in teaching music using "a dialogic, non-hierarchical approach" inspired by Cage and others.[18] In other words, experimental musicians became interested in using the techniques established by deskilling as a pedagogical method to train new skills – "reskilling."[19]

Cage's ideas were seminal for experimental music, but contemporary discussions are equally important for locating its usefulness for higher education music students. As previously discussed, Gottschalk's project, *Experimental Music Since 1970* is the most useful collection of contemporary, experimental work. She identifies five aspects of

[18] Tinkle.
[19] Tinkle.

experimental music that used throughout the genre: indeterminacy, change, research, non-subjectivity, and experience.[20]

Indeterminacy

According to composer Brian Eno, indeterminate music seeks to "generate unique (that is, not necessarily repeatable) outputs, but…at the same time seeks to limit the range of these outputs."[21] The outcome of an experimental composition, despite its intention as an artwork, is frequently unknown to the composer, the performer, and the audience. The same instructions or score, applied to different situations, could be unrecognizable. This is achieved through graphic scores, text scores, improvisation, unpredictable instruments, and aleatory. La Monte Young's piece *Composition 1960 #7,* for example, notates whole notes B-3 and F#-4 on a treble clef with the instructions "to be held for a long time." These are seemingly simple directions that invite a wide range of interpretations.

Change

Experimental music seeks change in the perception of the listener. As Gottschalk identifies in the writings of many experimentalists,

> In experimental music, real change occurs in the realm of human thought and experience. The experimentalist is not trying to change the musical world, but to change the thinking of one or more listeners during—and possibly after—the

[20] Gottschalk, *Experimental Music Since 1970*.
[21] Gottschalk.

> performance. As Greg Stuart explains, it "attempts to radically rethink the relationship between composition, performance and listening."[22]

At the most basic level, experimental music might seek to expand the realm of possibility of sound. At other levels, it might seek to change the perception of time or of thinking itself. Duration is a common material used in experimental composition and simple procedures applied over long time periods can change dramatically in the listeners' perceptions. Michael Pisaro's *ricefall(2),* for example, consists of grains of rice dropped on various surfaces for a period of 72 minutes. Perhaps it inspires new ways of viewing and hearing rice. Or perhaps it inspires the rice to disappear from the perceptual foreground.

Duration and change are also applied to the use of silence as a medium in experimental music. According to Éliane Radigue,

> If something just pump! into your ear, it takes time after, just to listen. The best example is when (les cloches) bells, are, say, in the mountains—after they stop, you can hear all the shimmering aspects of all the partials, overtones, harmonics, and all that . . . but as long as you have the bong! in the ear, you can't hear all of that.[23]

Non-Subjectivity

According to David Dunn, experimental music values "the materiality of sound, listening, environment, perception, and socio-political engagement" rather than the views

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[22] Gottschalk.
[23] Eubanks and Lamb, *Listening In/To the Liminal*.

of the performer.[24] According to Joe Panzner, it is the event that has agency rather than the performer.[25] Experimental music includes performers creating sounds, but it does not *feature* those people. The primary material of an experimental composition is the sound itself and the act of listening. Many experimental composers seek to remove any semblance of personal style from the performance of their pieces. Pauline Oliveros' piece *Teach Yourself to Fly* from her collection of "Sonic Meditations" involves people sitting in a circle, listening, breathing, and vocalizing together. Although each individual is making decisions, the ensemble as a whole is where the music is created. By participating in this piece, its performers erase themselves from the level of agency.

Research

Listening, perception, and sound are explored in experimental works in a manner similar to scientific research. Each piece has a question about the world that it seeks to answer through its performance. If there are no concrete answers to these questions, then the performance of the piece at least provides opportunity for extensive consideration. This further underscores the genre's openness. Bob Gilmore says that "'experimental' is just ongoing research."[26] Each repetition of a piece will uncover new perspectives because it does not limit itself to specific experiences. A composition, like a research project, might be able to make some hypotheses about its sound, but its true nature can only be observed in the moment of performance–the moment of experiment. Erik Satie's *Vexations,* which

[24] Gottschalk, *Experimental Music Since 1970*.
[25] Panzner, *The Process That Is the World*.
[26] Gottschalk, *Experimental Music Since 1970*.

is a simple piano piece to be played 840 times in a row, perhaps researches the transformational powers of such extensive repetition.

Experience

Experimental music exists primarily in the moment of its performance. Many experimental scores consist of graphics or texts and thus do not represent the outcomes of their instructions in the way that a classical music score might. According to Gottschalk,

> For me, the experiential nature of this music gives structural integrity to all of the other arcs. A music that is open to experience is contingent, or indeterminate. Ongoing research is carried out within the realm of realities external to the subjectivity of the composer. If the maker of the work resists expressing her own subjectivity, the piece has greater potential to resonate with the unique experience of each listener. By touching on the life of the listener as it extends beyond the scope of the concert hall or living room, such a work brings about lasting change. This approach to sound has the potential to speak, both directly and by analogy, to life as it is lived.[27]

Another important aspect of this music is one that is best explained by Joe Panzner in *The Process that is the World*: the idea of "the virtual."[28] Panzner's project is a reading of the work of John Cage through the writings of philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Deleuze and Guattari discuss the idea of virtuality at length and Panzner locates

[27] Gottschalk.
[28] Panzner, *The Process That Is the World*.

this idea in music. The virtual is written about by these authors as a set of potentials that exists in all events. A music performance, for example, is subject to many potentials including the resonance of the space, the temperature of the room, the audience and their many stirrings, and of course "unintended" notes. But it is also subject to many sub-sensory factors like the intention of the performer, the state of mind of the listener, and a kind of community mindset that many musicians refer to vaguely as the "energy of the room." The virtual is the set of things that are not perceived on a surface level but nevertheless contribute to the characteristics of a situation. Ikoniadou describes this using rhythm as a metaphor.[29] Rhythm is defined by both regular beats that are felt *and* the space in between those beats. Events consist similarly of a set of things which are experienced and a set of things in between the sensed occurrences. According to Ikoniadou, the unperceived factors (space between the beats) define rhythm as much, if not more than, the perceived factors (the beats themselves). The virtual occupies the space *in between* the things which we perceive with our senses. It is the unperceived factors between the beating of the perceptual world. These virtual potentials are a part of our perception despite our inability to perceive them directly. Like a Low Frequency Oscillator—a subsonic tone that can change how sonic noises are heard—the virtual modulates the real without us realizing it. There are virtual cracks between the real things which we experience–potential underneath that which is determined. Experimental music seeks to find these cracks and exploit them.

[29] Ikoniadou, *The Rhythmic Event: Art, Media, and the Sonic*.

CHAPTER 3

EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC VALUES: TEACHING

There is currently little writing or discussion about the teaching of experimental music. This is perhaps because it tends to reject standardization. There is even less writing about how experimental music is taught in higher education. Most of the writings about this music's value as a pedagogical tool discuss its use for musicians who don't read music and young children. These writings generally identify experimental music as a way of teaching creativity without the preceding, technical step of learning notation. This chapter will discuss these writings and how they might point to analogous benefits for music students in higher education.

There are two books that pertain to the teaching of experimental music at universities, but they are meant to be lecture notes and are primarily historical in nature. *Ear Cleaning* by R. Murray Schafer documents his class topics from an "experimental music course" which he taught in the 1960s at Simon Frasier University.[30] He uses "experimental music" in an early conception of the term that included electronic music. The class dealt on a theoretical level with some of the issues that Gottschalk later identified like indeterminacy[31] but there does not appear to be an experiential component of the course. Shafer's writing is thus more of an overview of historical perspectives. Alvin Lucier's *Music 109* also provides mostly historical perspectives on experimental music.

[30] Schafer, *Ear Cleaning: Notes for an Experimental Music Course*.
[31] Gottschalk, *Experimental Music Since 1970*.

The book is based on a course he taught of the same name and it is meant to assist other lecturers in discussing experimental music.[32] His use of the genre is, like Shafer's, broad and includes composers associated more with avant-garde or minimalist styles. These are excellent sources of background knowledge of important repertoire for the genre.

The value of experimental music as a teaching tool for novices or young children has attracted more impassioned writing beginning in the 1970s. A book from 1970 called *Experimental Music in Schools* by Brian Dennis advocated for allowing students to experiment with sound in the classroom. This book was written as a practical guide for teachers who wanted to introduce experimental pedagogy in their public school teaching. It includes a discussion of silence, possibilities for creating instruments, and some sample compositions. Most of these are simple text or graphic scores written by Dennis and meant to be interpreted by any level of musician. Dennis also wrote a broader argument for experimental teaching methods in *The Music Times* in 1972 titled "Experimental School Music."[33] In the article, he calls for the kind of creativity that surely lead to, for example, the first notational system and other early advances in classical music. He asks, "Why not…allow children themselves to be creative in the matter of notation?" He goes on to say,

> Their first efforts may be clumsy and inefficient but at least they will be creating their own impression of the sound they want to create. The children, the teacher and finally even the composer can learn much from this…School should be a place for activity, a place where supposed suppressed individuality can be re-kindled.

[32] Lucier, *Music 109*.
[33] Dennis, "Experimental School Music."

He makes a distinction between recreating the sound the teacher wants them to make and forming "[students'] own impression" of the sound. His article does not suggest that teachers throw out methods of listening critically to orchestral music. However, he insists that students treat it as inspiration rather than a model to be copied precisely. This mindset is discussed in more general terms by experts on elementary education but I will not delve into this field.

A journal was published in the 1970s called *Keeping up with Experimental Music in the Schools* that discussed methods that resonate with Dennis' writings. The volumes included suggestions for exercises in free improvisation, instructions for building simple instruments, and practical pedagogical articles. One exercise suggests using stock tickers in the newspaper as contour lines to guide improvisation. The line could indicate any variable vector from dynamics to pitch and so forth. Alan Vincent, in an article published in this journal titled "Creative Music Making in Secondary Schools" says that "[Schools] really must be more than just institutions dedicated to the pursuit of academic excellence. Rather, they are also places where the individual child is helped to grow and to realize his own unique potential, at more than one level of being."[34] He advocates for "…group awareness, building of confidence, sensitivity, even simply having fun with music as a form of communication…" and goes on to say that "…because these achievements cannot always be well assessed on our standardized scales, their values become too often abased in our competitive system."[35] In a more practical article from the same journal, June Tillman

[34] Vincent, "Creative Music Making in Secondary Schools."
[35] Vincent.

suggests that teachers "focus on the process."[36] She proposes free improvisation as an effective means of bypassing the theory of music–albeit temporarily–to give new students an experience with the creative process. Many of the arguments made for this kind of approach could apply to music students at any level.

Adam Tinkle writes in the 2010s about his experience teaching experimental music to young novices and how they benefit positively from the experience. He says that "a process of agency and choice yields a result over which students feel ownership and authorship."[37] This "process of agency and choice" emerges easily in experimental music practice. He says that he "encourage[s] divergence, creativity and imagination, certainly above settings of obeisant recitation of someone else's music."[38] He values individual expression over the ability to reproduce someone else's idea of perfection. His dissertation makes an excellent case for the use of experimental music as a pedagogical tool. His project discusses participatory music compositions and their merits at length. According to Tinkle, "participation is not just a goal in and of itself, it is also a means to a deeper educative end."[39] He goes on to say that, "[Experimental] pieces' underlying purpose, I contend, is to leverage the engagement and immersion that participation (perhaps) specially affords to lead people into an expanded or improved way of actually perceiving reality, to 'wake up to the very life we're living,' as Cage put it."[40] Tinkle implies here that experimental–or participatory–pieces might provide unique opportunities to develop certain skills.

[36] Tillman, "How To Organize Creative Work in the Classroom."
[37] Tinkle, "Experimental Music with Young Novices."
[38] Tinkle.
[39] Tinkle, "The Expanding Universal."
[40] Tinkle.

Tinkle's conception of "deskilling," discussed in Chapter 2, is proposed as a benefit for young novices who may not be able to read music or play traditional instruments. Deskilled pieces allow these individuals to become participants in the creation of art because they don't require any formal, technical training to execute. He also positions deskilling as a precursor to "reskilling," a process through which deskilled, participatory actions are used to train applicable skills.[41]

Pauline Oliveros developed a method for teaching skills through an experimental, deskilled practice which she lays out in *Deep Listening*.[42] According to Oliveros, "anyone can practice Deep Listening." She goes on to say,

> Prompted by experience and learning, listening takes place voluntarily. Listening is not the same as hearing and hearing is not the same as listening. The ear is constantly gathering and transmitting information—however attention to the auditory cortex can be tuned out. Very little of the information transmitted to the brain by the sense organs is perceived at a conscious level. Reactions can take place without consciousness.[43]

Throughout her book, Oliveros develops a practice through which someone can become better at being aware of the sounds around them. The methods she lays out are presented as a way to improve not only musical training but also mental and physical health. Oliveros include suggestions for exercises as well as philosophical approaches to

[41] Tinkle.
[42] Oliveros, *Deep Listening*.
[43] Oliveros.

listening and attention. She presents these approaches as potentially beneficial for everyone including untrained and trained musicians. The techniques outlines in *Deep Listening* take the technical parts of music making out of the situation in order to focus solely on the listening. A person need not play an instrument to participate in Oliveros' activities and a person who does play an instrument could certainly grow from occasionally making music away from it.

In *Experimental Music Notebooks*[44] from 1992, author Leigh Landy admits openly that his book is a set of opinions and feelings that she wanted to publish and thus does not adopt a rigorous tone or reference any outside sources. However, he presents it as an argument for experimental music practices for young children and its ideas could be applied at any level. He writes, ""Interpretation in traditional and experimental music genres should be investigated in music education alongside the traditional areas of music theory." He goes on to make suggestions about leading workshops and taking open-minded approaches to sound production like many of the previously-discussed sources. Chapter VI even mentions experimental music as potentially useful for higher education programs. This small section comes in the form of a deluge of opinions about the short-comings of conservatories and music schools. While he has strong thoughts about academic music training, he still calls for experimental music as a "partner of other sorts of music making and not just a marginal annex."[45]

Landy's claim that experimental music could be a useful supplemental tool for music education is supported by the other writings mentioned here about the pedagogy of experimental music. These sources identify experimental music as a path toward a

[44] Landy, *Experimental Music Notebooks*.
[45] Landy.

pedagogy of creativity. Dennis points out that the earliest innovators of our common practice were no doubt experimentalists of their own time.[46] Alan Vincent and June Tillman propose improvisation as a means of connecting with a student's "unique potential, at more than one level of being."[47] Adam Tinkle says that experimental music "(perhaps) specially affords to lead people into an expanded or improved way of actually perceiving reality."[48] Pauline Oliveros lays out a method of experimental practice to expand and improve skills from which anyone could benefit. These are all facilities that any music student in higher education strives to improve. Any of the writers mentioned in this chapter would agree that experimental music practice could be an efficient and effective means of training those skills.

[46] Dennis, "Experimental School Music."
[47] Vincent, "Creative Music Making in Secondary Schools."
[48] Tinkle, "The Expanding Universal."

CHAPTER 4

MUSIC VALUES

The values of experimental music do not exist solely in pieces of this genre. Openness, indeterminacy, change, research, non-subjectivity, the virtual, and experience exist in all music. However, these values could be seen to exist in opposition to the values of Western classical music. This chapter will show that some of the defining characteristics of experimental music discussed above can be found in other styles and genres. It will locate common ground between the values of classical music and experimental music.

Cage's "audition of many things at once"[49] is presented as a condition of experimental music but it could be applied to any form of performance. He is writing about the concatenation of multiple occurrences that lead to a performance event. The performer, the notes, and the sounds undoubtedly attract the most attention at a classical performance, but there are many other things happening within the situation beyond these surface features. The audience, performance space, perceptions, attention spans, weather, cell phones, set of potentials, and numerous other factors act during a performance. These occurrences and contingencies are usually categorized as "extra-musical." If one can accept that any of these extra-musical elements can occur, one must also accept that they could become part of the performance event. They will undoubtedly become annoying to

[49] Cage, *Silence*.

some and perhaps distract from the notes being played on stage, but one must accept that these effects are also part of the event.

According to Joe Panzner, "Even the most rigid musical works have a capacity for change pushing out from the codes of their formality."[50] Consider, for example, a quarter note. Its length seems to be indicated by the notation and a particularly rigorous musician could calculate its exact mathematical duration. The style with which it is played is suggested by factors including the tempo marking, the articulation indication, and historical performance practice. But decisions about a note's attack, decay, precise tuning, amplitude, exact length, shape, and many other things are made in the moment of the performance based on environmental factors of the event. For example, standard wisdom of classical performance suggests musicians vary their interpretation to different spaces. A cathedral and a hotel ballroom will produce different sounds and a performer must be prepared to react to this.[51] Every musician has also experienced this level of contingency when playing for the first time with a new ensemble. Timbre, tuning, dynamic, and timing become extremely volatile when reacting to other musicians and the responsive musician will be adaptable to different situations.[52] These are not necessarily factors to be avoided despite their inconvenience; they are occurrences inherent to the art. If one can accept that a musician must be versatile, then they must also accept that a performance event can be different every time.

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[50] Panzner, *The Process That Is the World*.
[51] See, for example, a discussion of concert space acoustics in Beranek, *Concert Halls and Opera Houses : Music, Acoustics, and Architecture*.
[52] See for example the discussion of tuning by Blum, "The Art of Quartet Playing."

Change, as Gottschalk describes it, refers to the capacity for music to change perceptions.[53] Experimental music does this through explorations of sound, duration, and performance practice. A simple goal of any music might be entertainment, *i.e.* making people happy. Even if happiness is not the goal, some emotion or some realization about the world is often a desired effect of musical performance. Even compositions of an academic aesthetic interact with our abilities of perception and analysis. Change is perhaps the clearest example of common ground between experimental and classical music.

Experimentation and research are often bound together and research can exist on several levels in a musical event. According to Bob Gilmore, "The composer would write a piece of music, try certain things out, and judge if they worked, didn't work, or only partly worked. Then in the next piece, that experiment could be followed up: like a scientist, one could go further down the same line."[54] This more literal use of the word experiment can, as has already been shown, apply to the processes of any art creation. On the surface, a composition might be exploring the possibilities of its own form or the possible tone colors of an orchestra. In these ways, Beethoven and Ravel were researchers with significant discoveries. A piece might also seek out ideas like new ways of letting its performers be expressive, novel processes of sound production, or unusual methods for thinking about music. This could be equally descriptive of works by diverse composers including Johannes Brahms, Luciano Berio, and Jürg Frey. Answers to questions are often explored and played out during performances be they classical or experimental.

[53] Gottschalk, *Experimental Music Since 1970*.
[54] Gottschalk.

Non-subjectivity is perhaps the factor of experimental music that can be seen to break with classical music tradition most directly. The performer, intention, virtuosity, and interpretive skill are highly valued in classical music[55] while experimental music seeks to subsume these actors into the event. Ignoring the performer is a difficult task, because the performer and their decisions are quite present and easy to perceive with most of our senses. But, every music events contain a variety of factors. Joe Panzner writes about a "willingness to have one's intentions disrupted…there are telephones in all our lives."[56] This is as true of performance as it is of any other situation. The musical act is sometimes described as a triangle among performer, composer, and audience. Although this visual can be helpful, Cagean thought and indeterminacy give rise to a "shape" closer to a cloud. This is similar to Tinkle's writings about "participation."[57] The subject is certainly a part of the event, but the perception of the audience relies heavily on a variety of non-subjective factors. As Panzner discusses, Cage and Deleuze reject the conception of "Hylomorphic agency" in which the will of the individual is the acting force on the universe. According to them, "Intention selects, limits, and redirects the movement of potential rather than being the spark that animates a static scene."[58]

To adopt this conception is to adopt a subject that acts but takes no credit beyond that which it deserves. The performer is perhaps an important actor in a performance, but the most important thing happening is the event itself: the concatenation of everything happening, an environmental aesthetic. As Panzner writes, it is not the subject that has agency but the event. He writes about the most important aspect of a performance being

[55] See, for example, McGill, *Sound in Motion : A Performer's Guide to Greater Musical Expression*.
[56] Panzner, *The Process That Is the World*.
[57] Tinkle, "The Expanding Universal."
[58] Panzner, *The Process That Is the World*.

"contingency" or "acting in a way that not necessarily anything happens but if you hadn't acted, nothing would have happened at all."[59] The subject is a particularly visible part of everything going on, but the entirety of the situation itself has primary agency.

The aspects of music provided by this chapter to be integral to classical music add up to create a picture of a highly experiential art. Cage's idea of an "environment"[60] of sound can never be notated or intended. His score for *4'33"*, for example, is simply instructions for the performer, not a representation of the finished artwork. This is true of all musical scores to some extent. Panzner writes about the impossibility of the "model-copy relationship."[61] This mindset opens music up to contingency which has been shown to exist in all parts of a musical event. Even the most specific notation, for example, is highly open because it lacks the ability to describe every aspect of a situation. Because music is non-subjective, it exists in many perceptions and possibilities, not just the perception of the performer. The view of music through a non-subjective lens allows for a "middle way" of perception–one that opens upon a plural ontology that allows for multiple viewpoints. The performance event as an experience is a binding up of the perceptions of everyone and everything involved in it; it is an experiential concatenation. This is no less true of a performance of a Beethoven symphony than it is of a *Sonic Meditation* by Pauline Oliveros. Many people sit in a room making and listening to sounds. Each has a different experience that in turn modulates the way in which they are making sound. This cycle continues.

[59] Panzner.
[60] Cage, *Silence*.
[61] Panzner, *The Process That Is the World*.

CHAPTER 5

MUSIC VALUES: TEACHING

So far, I have discussed experimental music values and the writings about them as effective pedagogical methods for untrained musicians. I have located common ground between classical and experimental music through many characteristics present in all music. This chapter will use the methods laid out in sources from Chapter 3 and the intersection identified in Chapter 4 to discuss experimental music as a pedagogy of creativity. This is not an exhaustive argument by any means as it contains only a single case study: my own experience. It is also a difficult topic as creativity is a highly subjective term. Writing about the pedagogy of creativity cannot aspire to any concrete goal as it will be different for each person. Because experimental music is a specific and definable (with difficulty) entity which also does not necessarily aspire to concrete goals, it can provide interesting possibilities for cross-examination with creativity. The pedagogy of creativity is perhaps an experimental pursuit.

One of my primary difficulties in music school was something many musicians refer to as performance anxiety. Everyone experiences this differently, but I felt it as a disconnect between my desire to play a piece the way I knew it "should" be played and the way I felt I wanted to play it. I was new to ideas of historical performance practice and at the time I perceived these rules as unending. This technical, cerebral pedagogy seemed to distract from my goals of expression. As a result of attempting to pursue both areas

simultaneously, I felt that I struggled to improve both my factual knowledge and my creativity. There was, as with any young student, a further disconnect with the way I wanted to play and my technical ability to do so. Solving this latter issue is the subject of many other books and documents. Experimental music perhaps inspired a practice of indeterminacy, experience, virtuality, and non-subjectivity stripped away from technique, academia, and classical performance practice. When I returned to standard repertoire after performing experimental music, it felt like I was able to discover the experimental aspects of classical music. The merits of different balances of these aspects is, of course, open to interpretation but it nevertheless felt useful to have a new perspective on the music I had studied so extensively.

Tinkle's conception of the "skill/deskilling dialectic" is a particularly apt portrayal of this process catalyzed by experimental music. He initially uses the increments "skill-deskill-reskill" to depict movements in art music across the 20th century but they can also form the basis of a pedagogical method.[62] A skilled practitioner of music starts by stripping away the trappings of their training in order to play as "naturally" as possible.[63] Once ideas of performance practice and skill have been forgotten–if momentarily–the artist can begin to practice new skills ("reskilling") that are only possible to learn through a deskilled environment. The previously-discussed writings of Jennie Gottschalk[64] and Pauline Oliveros[65] provide insights into the kinds of skills that can be developed by this kind of practice.

[62] Tinkle, "Experimental Music with Young Novices."
[63] Tinkle, "The Expanding Universal."
[64] Gottschalk, *Experimental Music Since 1970*.
[65] Oliveros, *Deep Listening*.

The seeming contradiction of a deskilled skill provides an interesting insight into a middle way of perception. In order to develop new habits, old ones must sometimes be momentarily forgotten. A wind player learning the piano will perhaps need to temporarily remap their brain so that their hands move independently. A runner learning to swim will need to find new ways of breathing. These are simple examples of processes of learning that require processes of unlearning; further thought on these kinds of processes can proceed at various levels. The entrenched skills of practitioners are not entirely forgotten but perhaps new approaches to technique are made available as a result of deskilling. As Tinkle writes, "What would it mean to adopt a pedagogy that banishes inherited tradition and imposed knowledge? What musical skills or knowledge could we attain if we committed ourselves to such a pedagogy?"[66] He goes on to quote Thomas Turino who says, "mixed-skill contexts permit the involvement of amateurs alongside masters, but more traditional notions of knowledge, skill, and mastery remain prized, and may in fact be the ultimate goal of amateur participation."[67]

Practicing experimental music is a process of discovering new things. An experimental composition leaves itself open to many different interpretations and many different occurrences that can happen in an event. The work's score cannot necessarily make any predictions about what it will sound like, so the musician can experience discovery at the forefront of the activity. While it is possible to learn to be sensitive to this feeling through classical music, it can be difficult, as it was for me. Practicing experimental music can provide access to a middle way of perception. One of the primary concerns of my earlier, personal case study was one of bifurcation; I felt trapped between technique

[66] Tinkle, "Experimental Music with Young Novices."
[67] Turino, *Music as Social Life : The Politics of Participation*.

and musicality and unable to prioritize between the two. Experimental music didn't provide me with answers but it catalyzed a more plural investigation into my own pedagogy and ideals of musical practice.

On a practical note, this may not be a solution that works for everyone. It is certainly not a universal solution that works after performing one openly notated piece; time, energy, and a willingness to investigate various methods are needed to find cross-cultural value. In the beginning of learning about this practice, I had a fair amount of skepticism about it that perhaps anyone should have when learning anything new. Many of my classmates did not have the same experiences that I had.

Furthermore, experimental music as a genre has reentered a reskilling era; it has lasted long enough to develop its own set of performance practices. Most of these have to do with intention as previously mentioned and some are unspoken choreographic elements. None of these specific practices have been written about to my knowledge and I am not interested in noting them here. However, they are mild or inconsequential enough to not detract from the participatory stance taken by them. Those who have never practiced experimental music will have no barriers to beginning despite the appearance of tradition among its leaders.

It is precisely this "participatory stance,"[68] as Tinkle discusses, that allows for the pedagogy of creativity. This teaching methodology in which the distinctions between teacher and student, audience and musician are blurred allows for an examination of the values of music from varying perspectives. As with experimental music, the participatory approach simultaneously wills a bounded outcome and avoids making that outcome

[68] Tinkle, "Experimental Music with Young Novices."

specific, allowing for the development of creativity. As in Oliveros' music, experimental practice allows for the building up of new skills through a deskilled activity. Because "anyone can perform *Sonic Meditations*," they provide "mixed-skill contexts [that] permit the involvement of amateurs alongside masters…"[69] As Tinkle says, "Moving decisively beyond a conceptualization of sound as external stimulus with objectively observable qualities, Oliveros' questions demand personal introspection: what do you hear? Participation here means not merely having ones' actions scored, but rather participating in a conversation where one's input, one's voice, is valued."[70] In reference to Lucier's *Chambers*, he says that the piece, "while still demanding severence with Western art music competencies, is actually more focused on participation as a form of pedagogy."[71]

This "participation as a form of pedagogy" provides a direct parallel to my pedagogy of creativity. According to an article written by Tinkle, "A process of agency and choice yields a result over which students feel ownership and authorship."[72] This can be reframed as an experience with creation that carries individual meaning. It fosters a personalized set of goals and ideals. Perhaps this focus on creativity through the lens of the individual rather than through a universal conception is a pathway to discovering Ikoniaduo's middle way–a way of accounting for multiple values of perception.[73] In the experimental, participatory moment, an individual's decisions can be simultaneously gravitational and communal, providing an immanent conception of creativity.

[69] Turino, *Music as Social Life : The Politics of Participation*.
[70] Tinkle, "The Expanding Universal."
[71] Tinkle.
[72] Tinkle, "Experimental Music with Young Novices."
[73] Ikoniadou, *The Rhythmic Event: Art, Media, and the Sonic*.

CHAPTER 6

MUSIC

This chapter will apply the concepts that have been discussed in the previous chapters by analyzing four pieces of standard flute repertoire alongside four pieces of experimental music. Concepts, experiences, and philosophies from the experimental pieces will be applied toward the analysis of the classical pieces. These analyses will reveal a pedagogy of creativity through experimental music that could be useful for higher education music students.

Circular Music No. 6 **by Jürg Frey and** ***Fantasia No. 10*** **by Georg Philipp Telemann**

Circular Music No. 6 is a composition by the Swiss composer Jürg Frey. It is the sixth of a series of pieces which feature repetition with high levels of indeterminacy. This work consists only of numbers 1 through 8 written on the page in various orderings and with various repeat marks around them. An excerpt of the score appears below, along with the instructions for performing it. The instrumentation is open and the score does not indicate how long a performance should last. This and other pieces in the *Circular Music* series are sometimes played for at least twenty minutes and frequently longer. Each performer is instructed to choose one pattern (*e.g.* A or B in the example below) with the option to choose a second later in the piece. Each number represents a sound selected by the

performer and the pattern of sounds is repeated as many times as the performer chooses. This usually generates a slightly chaotic sound that gains form through time and repetition.

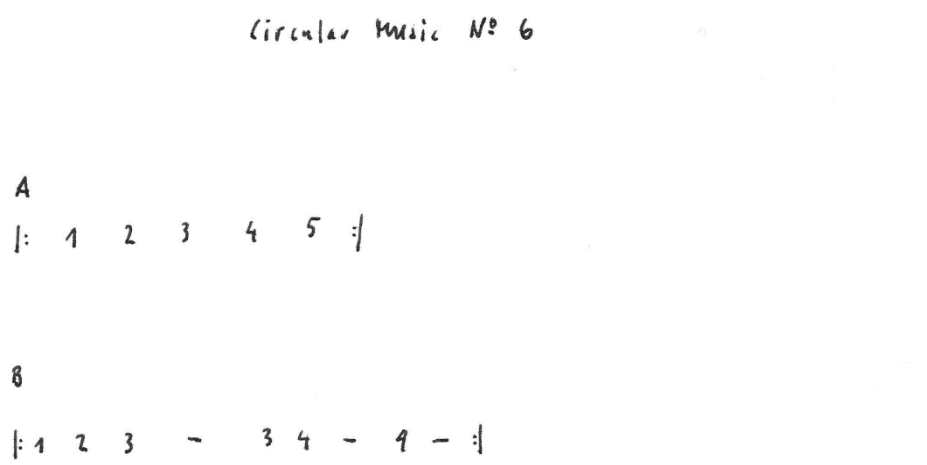


Figure 6.1: Excerpt from *Circular Music No. 6* by Jürg Frey

A, B, C, D, E, F, G: seven parts.

Every player chose one of the parts. Not all of the parts have to be chosen, parts can be chosen by more than one player.

Numbers (1-8) are different sounds, noises, pitches. "-" is a pause. Every player decides individually the sound and the duration for each number, as well as the duration of the pauses. Any kind of sounds and durations are welcome as long as a mutual balance of dynamics is respected.
Sounds (numbers) are slightly connected to each other/slightly separated from each other.
The player plays repetitions of his part (at least two repetitions). The start and the end and the amount of repetitions are individual decisions by the performers.

To restart later in the piece is possible, either with the same or with another part and/or other sounds.

Repetitions: the same sounds and durations are played in a loop. (like a "melody", a phrase of sounds, a list of sounds...)

Varied repetitions: give every sound the tendency to be a little longer than before, make the loop longer. Give every sound the tendency to be a little shorter than before, make the loop shorter.

The dynamics are low to very low in general.

Figure 6.2: Instructions for *Circular Music No. 6* by Jürg Frey

This notation style is in between common practice scores and graphic scores and thus invites thinking of both in the same space. It employs a regular pattern of easily recognizable alpha-numeric characters that decline to represent any particular sound despite their familiarity. However, it is not as abstract as a typical graphic score like Cornelius Cardew's *Treatise* or Earle Brown's *December 1952*. It thus engages both the freedom of indeterminate notation and the seeming rigidity of language, revealing a mode of thought that can encompass both.

This operation of engaging numbers as abstract signifiers for sounds is similar to the practice of using letters that has been adopted by common practice music. The only difference between this composition and one of classical music is that the precise decision is left open to the performer about which graphic represents what kind of sound.

Indeterminacy of notation is explored by this composition but is a factor of all music. The dots and lines that are known to Western art music as notation are not as open to interpretation as Frey's numbers, but they nevertheless require individual and immanent decisions for musical execution. As discussed earlier in this document, many of these decisions have been standardized under the guise of performance practice, but the microscopic details of a performance can never be anticipated, notated, or controlled by the score. This indeterminacy is difficult to perceive in classical music but an experience playing a piece like *Circular Music No. 6* can reveal these aspects of Western art music. Viewing common practice notation through the lens of graphic notation filters out its concrete aspects and reveals its indeterminacies. By deskilling the act of reading music, Frey allows for new skills to be practiced. Playing *Circular Music No. 6* can make clear the virtuality of all notation.

Playing this piece would be an effective practice of creativity for flutists working on Baroque repertoire, especially the highly subjective set of fantasias by Georg Philipp Telemann. These pieces occupy a space in the repertoire that is perhaps the most surrounded by ideas of historical accuracy. However, a survey of both modern Baroque musicians and historical treatises reveals a large number of varied opinions on the performance of these pieces. Jacques-Martin Hotteterre[74], Johann Joaquim Quantz[75], and Telemann write slightly different recommendations in their respective treatises on flute playing. Quantz systematically notates a myriad of options for ornamentation of Baroque pieces as well as many different styles of articulation. Telemann notates several different options for interpreting his own pieces in his *Sonate Metodiche*. All of these resources mention "taste" as a factor to be considered in performing Baroque music. A survey of recordings of the Telemann fantasias further shows the vast range of possibilities for interpreting them. These emphases on possibility, indeterminacy, and experience are similar to the values of experimental music. So how can the academic rigor employed by ideas of Baroque performance practice coincide with this seeming openness?

The first movement of the *Fantasia No. 10* by Telemann is provided below. Viewed through the lens of *Circular Music No. 6*, the possibilities of this composition become more easily perceptible. This particular edition assists in laying bare the role of the notation as an abstract signifier like Frey's number notation. It provides very little information other

[74] Hotteterre, *Principles of the Flute, Recorder & Oboe*.
[75] Quantz, "On Playing the Flute."

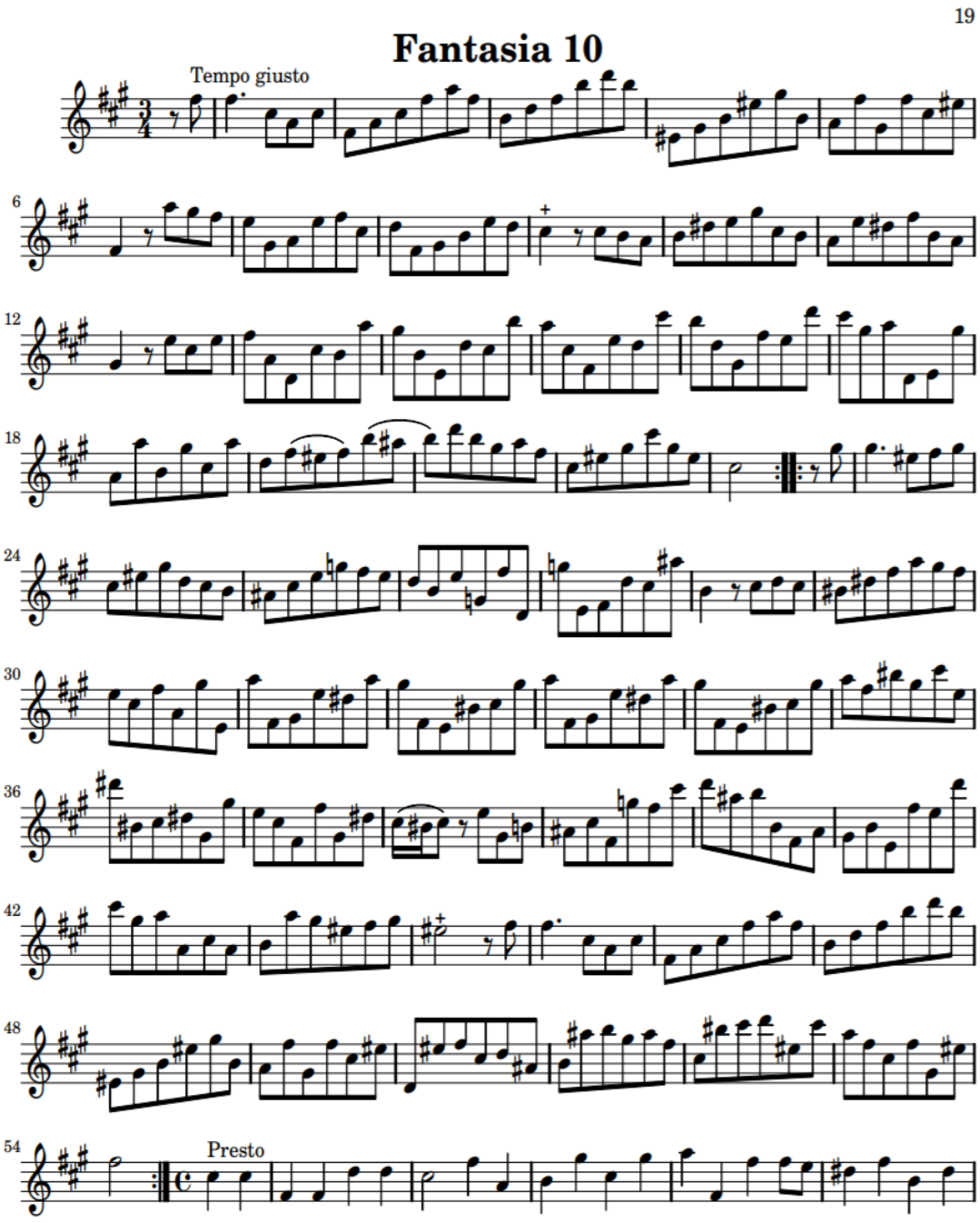


Figure 6.3*: Fantasia 10* by Georg Philipp Telemann: Tempo giusto

than the pitches to be played and the rhythm in which to play them. Many historical treatises purport that repeated sections provide even more room for interpretation,

suggesting that ornamentation should be added the second time.[76]

There are several aspects of this score that are open to interpretation. Note lengths are one of the most indeterminate parts of this movement. Historical practice maintains only that these notes must not be the same length all the way through.[77] Dynamics are also not specified although most musicians follow some general guidelines. For example, the material in measures 31-32 is often played softer when it is repeated in measures 33-34, and the sequence beginning in measure 13 is often accompanied by a crescendo. The implied bass line created by the lower notes in measure 5 is another typical source of interpretative inspiration and many performers treat these lines differently.

The performance of this piece could benefit from the performance of Frey's because its openness is similar to the openness of *Circular Music* with only two exceptions: Frey does not specify pitch and his music has no historical performance practice. To play Frey's music is, in some ways, similar to playing Telemann's. Playing experimental music deskills performance allowing new skills to become apparent. It also allows for a chance to experience creativity with no burden of historical performance "rules." Even if a musician has played *Circular Music No. 6* with the composer, they will still have little background idea of what it "should" sound like because it is intended to sound like a different piece every time it is played. It thus allows a performer to concentrate on decision-making and creativity with no other thought processes to distract them.

[76] See Hotteterre, Quantz, Telemann.
[77] See Quantz, "On Playing the Flute."

***Stones* by Christian Wolff and *Concerto for Flute and Orchestra* by Carl Nielsen**

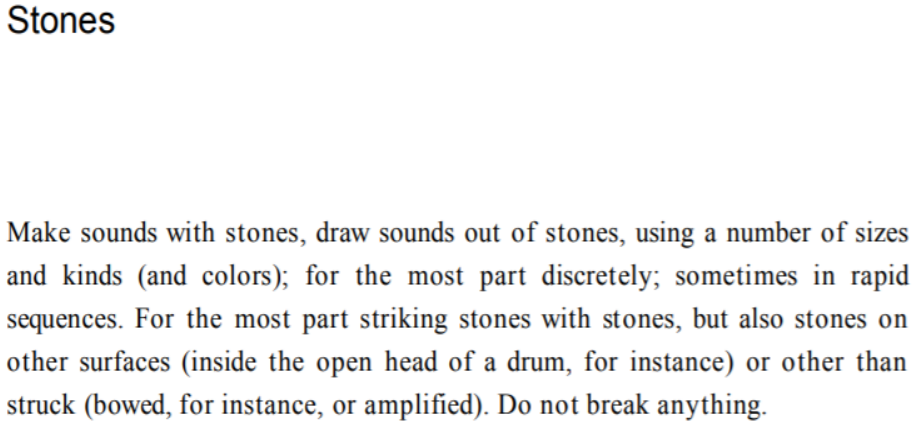


Figure 6.4: Score for *Stones* by Christian Wolff

Christian Wolff's *Stones* is a text score from the composer's "Prose Collection." The instructions are simple; the score in its entirety is included above. As with many text scores, the composition is open to interpretation on many levels. Wolff's recording with the *Wandelweiser* composer collective was released on *Edition Wandelweiser Records* in 1996, has a run time of one hour, four minutes, and sixteen seconds.

On the surface, it seems to be a simple composition, but its value as a catalyst for discovery is revealed when rendered over a long duration. In lieu of an actual performance experience, I will share my first encounter of the score in a class at the University of South Carolina. Many of the performers reacted initially to the novelty of making sounds with found objects, since many of us were neither percussionists nor experimental musicians. This wore off after five minutes when the oddity alone was not substantial enough to maintain focus. A shorter period of discovery followed in which we found different ways

of hitting together the rocks we had selected. This stage revealed many new sounds and textures. The surface discovery gave way after 10 minutes to a type of boredom and despair for not having more options at our disposal. After outlasting this brief feeling, we each began finding new ways of thinking about the stones available to us. This gave way to a texture entirely different from the initial rock sounds. New sounds began emerging and we stopped thinking about the stones as objects and began thinking about the sounds and processes in which we were engaging. The value of the piece was revealed as an experience with a mode of discovery we had never felt before.

This kind of experience has the potential to rewire the way musicians think about music. Once the proverbial glass has been shattered, there is no putting it back. It is like learning a new language that contains words that don't exist in one's native tongue. New modes of perception and new perspectives are almost forced upon the performers. As with the above example, the seeming openness of the piece revealed itself to be quite limited which in turn inspired us to discovery. The process of skill-deskill-reskill played out as a pedagogy of creativity.

This concept of learning a new language is not exclusive to experimental music; it exists in some forms in typical classical music pedagogy. The technique of limitation, at play to some degree in *Stones*, is commonly used to practice composition or classical music. Just like Wolff asks the performer to explore sound that can be made using only stones, composition students sometimes have to compose pieces within certain limitations. The limitations are revealed to have more possibility than previously thought and thus the student learns new sound possibilities. This is the purpose of learning species counterpoint because such tight constraints can force the student to confront very specific aspects of

music.[78] Performers similarly are encouraged to zoom in on certain aspects of pieces and isolate different parts of a performance as a method of practicing.[79]

In addition to its process of limitation, *Stones* allows for an experience of discovery. The piece can teach musicians to view a piece for its possibilities rather than its constraints. When performed for a long duration, it actually forces this mindset on its performers. What would it be to apply this mode of thought to a piece of classical music? A concerto, for example, has many constraints–so many constraints that it is difficult to view it as containing any possibility at all. A music student could, therefore, benefit from applying a text score lens to their interpretation of a classical concerto.

I will demonstrate this using Carl Nielsen's *Concerto for Flute and Orchestra*. The piece is perhaps one of the most standard and most difficult pieces in the flute literature. Its technical passages, coupled with the difficulty of balancing volume with a full orchestra, provide myriad constraints to distract the attention of the performer. Its multiple standard recordings supply even more baggage.

Below is an excerpt from the piano reduction that represents one of the most technically challenging passages of the piece. Many flutists practice these runs incessantly and scrutinize them closely for accuracy. Coordination with the interceding clarinet runs provides an additional source of anxiety. (This "anxiety" refers to a preoccupation with the precision of copying a model where the model is the score). This gives rise to several issues. Besides my previous argument that scores are inherently indeterminate, and Panzner's position that models cannot be copied[80], the anxiety distracts from the creative act that has

[78] Kraft, "A New Approach to Species Counterpoint."
[79] See, for example, Kaplan, *Practicing for Artistic Success : The Musician's Guide to Self-Empowerment*.
[80] Panzner, *The Process That Is the World*.

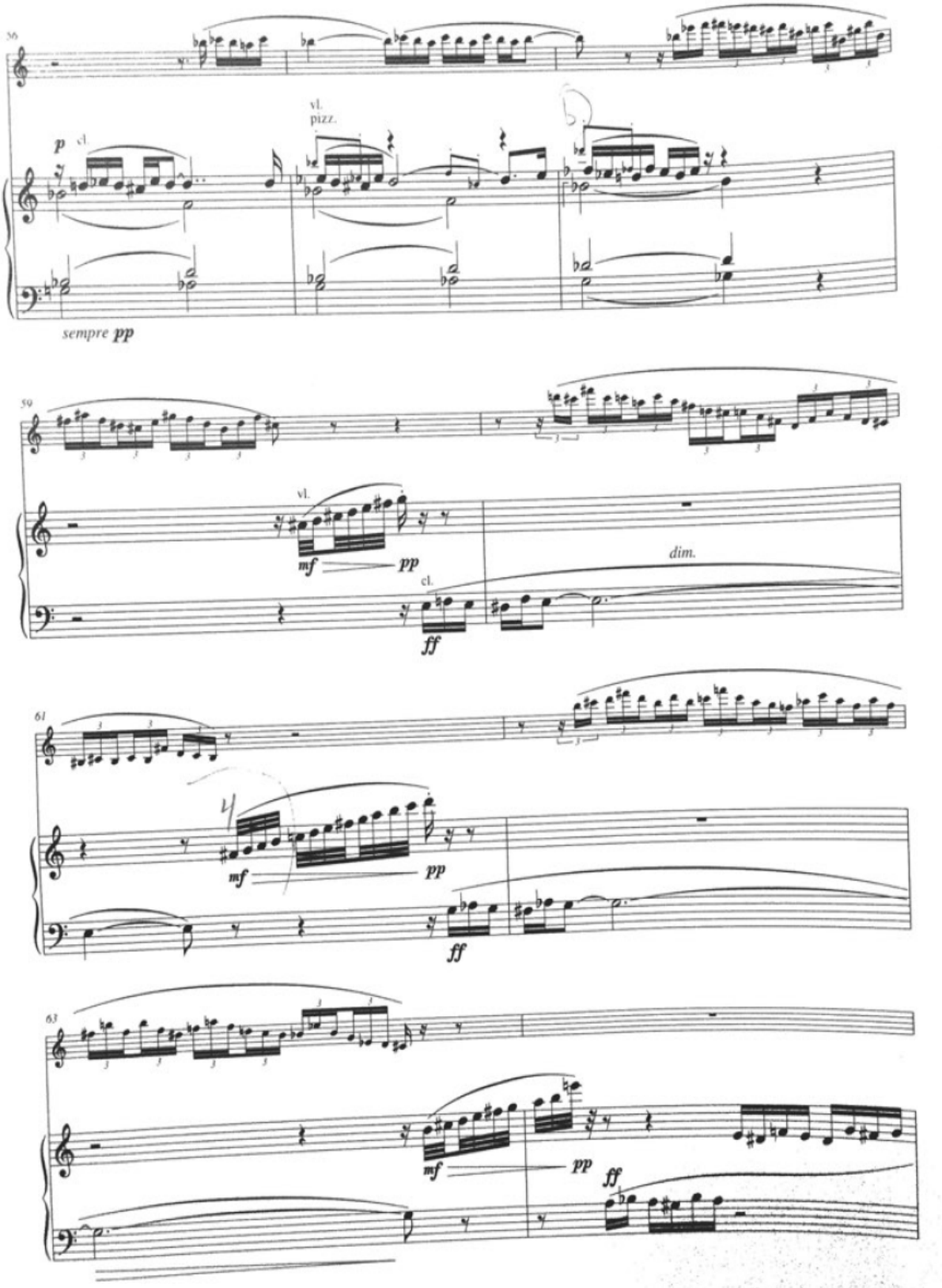


Figure 6.5: *Concerto for Flute and Orchestra* by Carl Nielsen (mm. 56-64)

been proven to be central to music making. The constraints are perceived as so great that one has no flexibility within them.

Applying an experimental mindset like that forced upon the performer by *Stones* can reveal this piece for its possibilities rather than its constraints. When interpreting the line beginning in measure 56, one could match the clarinet or differ from the clarinet, play the rhythm precisely or have it match the meandering melody line, play a constant dynamic or ebb and flow, apply *agogic* accents to the pivot note (B-flat), emphasize the half-step relationships which builds tension, and many other things. The sixteenth-note triplet run that follows this could be played straight down or it could be turned into a melody. The last two triplets of measure 58 share a bottom note while the top two notes are in sequence; this could provide inspiration for interpretation. Emphasizing the first note of each beat reveals a descending melody. The sixteenth notes leading up to the high F-sharp could be emphasized to set off the triplets that follow. The whole run could crescendo or decrescendo according to the individual's preference.

These kinds of possibilities could be similarly discovered in the rest of the piece, but they are difficult to think about for a musician learning this work for the first time. The technical demands are so great that they appear as constraints on the interpretation but can distract from the creative processes that act in any musical event.

Practicing experimental music like *Stones* can rewire the musician's brain, allowing them to see the possibilities in even a piece like Nielsen's flute concerto. This would make approaching a demanding piece for the first time easier.

***Teach Yourself to Fly* by Pauline Oliveros and *Sechs Bagatelles* by György Ligeti**

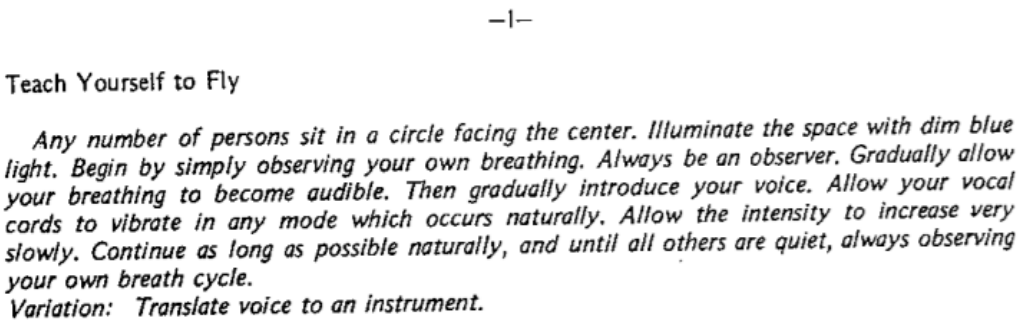
Pauline Oliveros' set of "Sonic Meditations" use listening as an act of creation. They use text to describe processes in which a group of performers may engage. According to Oliveros' introduction to the set of compositions,

> With continuous work, some of the following becomes possible with Sonic Meditations: Heightened states of awareness or expanded consciousness, changes in physiology and psychology from known and unknown tensions to relaxations which gradually become permanent. These changes may represent a tuning of mind and body. The group may develop positive energy which can influence others who are less experienced. Members of the Group may achieve greater awareness and sensitivity to each other. Music is a welcome by-product of this activity.[81]

Teach Yourself to Fly is the first and perhaps simplest of the Sonic Meditations. Its instructions are included below. Each performer is simply told to observe their own breath and gradually allow it to become audible. The most important instruction of the piece is "Always be an observer."

Two kinds of listening are important in this piece: listening to oneself and listening to the group. Oliveros says to "simply observ[e] your own breathing." She also includes the instruction to "Continue as long as possible naturally, and until all others are quiet…" This requires awareness of the group while the performer observes their own breathing.

[81] Oliveros, *Deep Listening*.



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Teach Yourself to Fly

Any number of persons sit in a circle facing the center. Illuminate the space with dim blue light. Begin by simply observing your own breathing. Always be an observer. Gradually allow your breathing to become audible. Then gradually introduce your voice. Allow your vocal cords to vibrate in any mode which occurs naturally. Allow the intensity to increase very slowly. Continue as long as possible naturally, and until all others are quiet, always observing your own breath cycle.
Variation: Translate voice to an instrument.

Figure 6.5: *Teach Yourself to Fly* by Pauline Oliveros

Neither of these tasks are simple. To simply observe anything about oneself is a complicated procedure but Oliveros invites the performer into this headspace so succinctly that it appears approachable. Most who perform this will be distracted by a plethora of outside stimuli including anxiety about the situation and self-criticism about their voice. While engaging in this task that the most mindful practitioners of meditation take lifetimes to understand, Oliveros also calls on the performer to remain aware of their fellow actors. These are not solitary meditations. The ability to notice everything everyone else is doing in an event is a rare gift but one that can be practiced through these pieces.

Listening is a skill that has obvious correlations to all ensemble playing for classical musicians, but it is usually trained through chamber music. Most higher education music programs include a chamber music component used to train musicians to hear each other and play together without the help of a conductor, among other things.

A particularly difficult example of standard chamber literature is György Ligeti's *Sechs Bagatelles*. The passage included below at measure 110 of movement III is one of the most problematic to execute while remaining creative and musical. Interlocking seven-against-three rhythms are juxtaposed by a melody and two counter-melodies. The musicians playing rhythmic septuplets are asked to line up exactly to maintain the tempo. Meanwhile, the melodic voices must precisely place their juxtaposed, simple rhythms

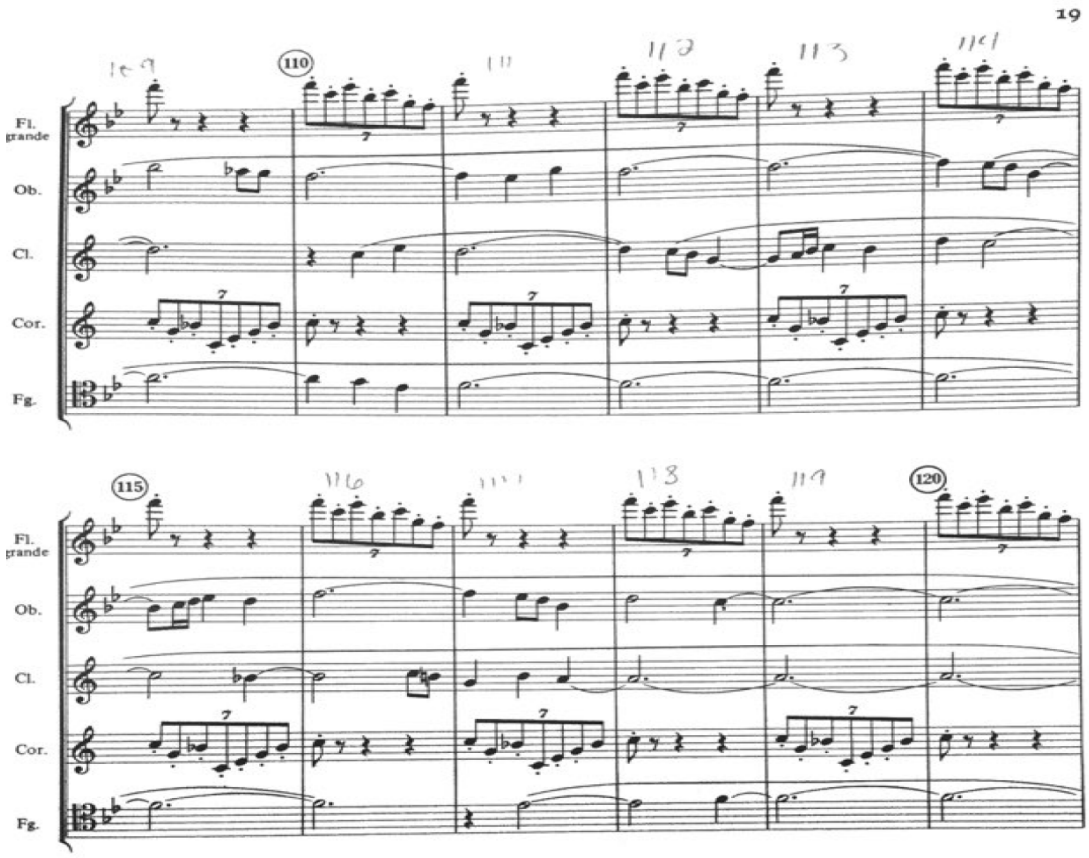

Figure 6.6: *Sechs Bagatelles* by György Ligeti: III. Allegro grazioso

while creating sustained lines of music. The rhythmic section must be able to listen for the melody in order to not cover or disrupt it. The sustained line must in turn remain aware of the rhythmic underpinning pushing them forward.

These aspects of the piece may seem obvious or simple but, like *Teach Yourself to Fly*, they are easier notated than executed. In the same way that "simply observing" oneself is complicated on many levels, listening to an entire performance situation is bound up in ego, expectation, and the environment. Observing oneself runs the risk of tuning everything else out. Concentrating on the group's sound could result in a decline in personal standards. As has already been discussed, focusing on only the music making obscures the rest of the event. Staying together and in tune is only the surface of what is required to perform in a chamber ensemble.

Another example of the importance of listening in performing Ligeti is in movement V. The passage below requires close coordination between the clarinet and flute to execute as written. It's notation at *pp* further complicates the section. Most musicians will seek to avoid uncharacteristic, conducting-like movements during soft playing that could distract from the mood and disrupt the physiological production of the sound. This is additionally difficult because the clarinet and flute sound the same half-step interval during the tremolos trading off which member of it they play. The only tool to use in playing these rhythms is listening.

The skills built by performing the "Sonic Meditations" are extremely useful when playing chamber music like the *Sechs Bagatelles*. By deskilling the act of listening to an entire situation, musicians can reskill the practice of hearing themselves and others simultaneously. Oliveros also encourages the performers to become part of their environment. Chamber music viewed through an experimental lens becomes an opportunity to engage in a group meditation in which its performers can observe both

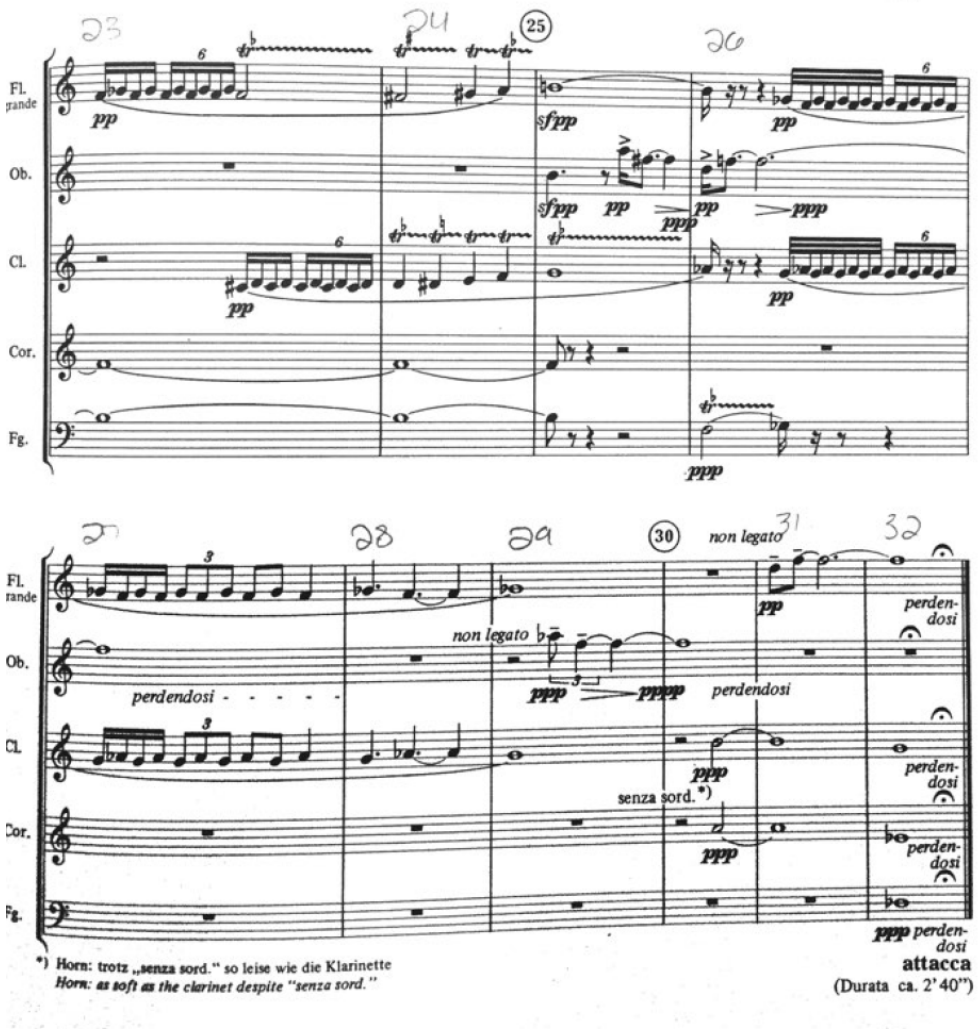

Figure 6.7: *Sechs Bagatelles* by György Ligeti: V. Adagio. Mesto

themselves and their cohorts. It opens onto a pedagogy of creativity that allows many perspectives to coexist and a group to practice the art of being both individual and cohesive. This conception of chamber music as simultaneously an individual and a group activity is paradoxical. Its practice can thus benefit from a slippery pedagogy made approachable through the lens of experimental music.

***within (1)* by Michael Pisaro and *East Wind* by Shulamit Ran**

The *within* series of pieces by Michael Pisaro are studies in non-subjective solo composition. Solo music is traditionally the most subjective of all media; the genre's name is clearly oriented toward the single person who is perceived in the event. Pisaro explores non-subjectivity in this music that usually relies heavily on the agency of the individual.

within (1) is for solo flute and an excerpt of the score appears below. Each page contains between six and eight lines of music, each of which contains repetitions of the same note. The instructions say that the duration of each pulse is five seconds: meaning that each half note should be sustained for ten seconds and followed by a five-second pause. The end of each line contains a dotted whole rest which should be held for thirty seconds. The instructions go on to say:

> The sound is very soft, but no tension is required to maintain it.
>
> The sound is a part of the space — imperceptible, but present.
>
> The flutist does not strive to produce the sound, it is allowed to happen.
>
> No effort is required to hear or to forget the sound.
>
> Above all, the sound takes on the almost distracted character of someone humming to themselves…
>
> No effort should be made to vary the sound.
>
> No effort should be made to keep it the same.

As the instructions indicate, this is a piece that revolves around a process, not around a performer. The execution of the technique required to play as directed is minimal.

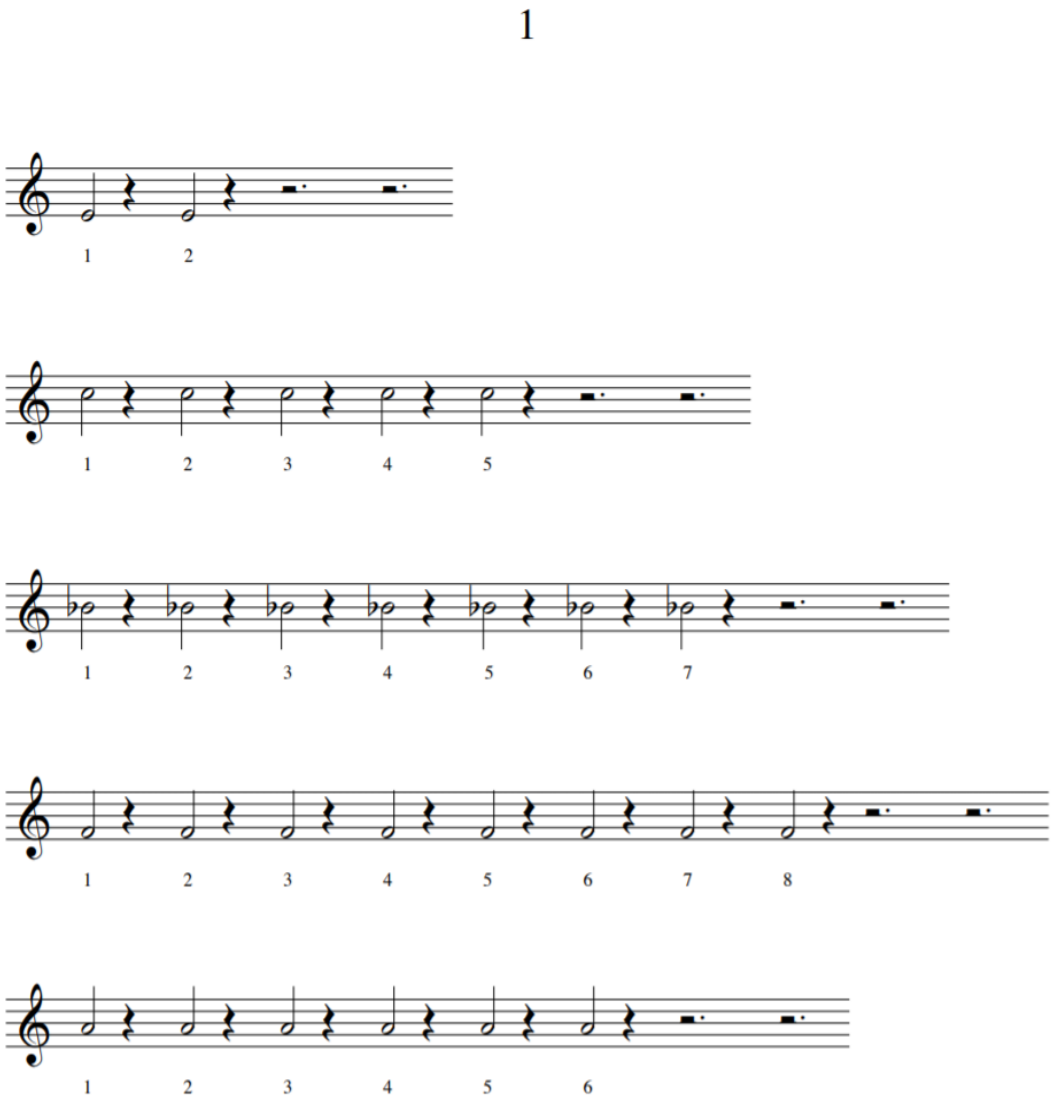

Figure 6.8: *within (1)* by Michael Pisaro, page 1

It may seem difficult to maintain such soft notes, but Pisaro releases the performer of this burden by providing that the sound need not be varied or static. The sound merely *is* whatever that means for each performer in each situation. In this way, the performance of the piece is deskilled.

The primary material of this composition is the event: the situation in which it happens. It is about the act of listening, the agency of the environment, and virtuality. The composition cannot be about a soloist showing off their skills because the piece's instructions preclude the necessity of technique. It cannot be about the compositional process because this process is quite simple. *within* is about the event.

But, it is close enough to classical composition to force the listener to confront their classical predispositions if they have any. It contains characteristics similar to a piece of standard flute repertoire like a title, standard notation, and the use of standard flute tones. These aspects set the performer or the listener up to expect certain developments or motions consistent with classical music. But the piece's process continues to the end in exactly the same way it starts. The tessitura of the above example is consistent throughout the composition. While a performer could select just one page of the work, it is possible to play this piece for a total of sixty minutes. This duration allows the listener a chance to confront their classically-tuned habits and perhaps question their aesthetics. To use Tinkle's words, it makes a "demand…for the removal of all traces of [Western art music] training, skill and tradition."[82]

The performer of *within* is forced to suspend their subjectivity. Playing this piece can cause anxiety about tone quality, intonation, breath control, and audience reactions, to name a few. So, the flutist must accept the instructions of the composer to not control the sound and instead become aware of the situation in which they are acting. This causes them to make contact with the indeterminacy, research, change, potential, and non-subjectivity of a performance event.

[82] Tinkle, "The Expanding Universal."

East Wind by Shulamit Ran is perhaps a bridge between the world of traditional flute playing and that of free experimentation because of the composer's notes to the performer. Ran suggests that "the piece be learned initially by carefully observing all notation–rhythmic and otherwise. Once learned, however, a considerable amount of freedom, temporal and gestural, may be introduced, and a prevailing sense of fantasy is to be aimed for." She encourages experimentation within this seemingly specifically-notated piece. Despite her openness, the piece has taken on a life as a competition piece the performance of which is frequently judged on accuracy. Therefore, locating non-subjectivity in it could be a problematic but enlightening endeavor for a flutist.

An excerpt of the beginning appears below. The repetition in the opening motive is similar to the repetition of the notes in *within* albeit less extreme. This passage is sometimes seen as an opportunity for the soloist to demonstrate brilliance, but what if Pisaro's instructions were applied here? How would the piece sound if no effort was made to vary the sound, no effort was made to make it the same, and the process was simply allowed to enact itself? Rather than an interpretation that centers on technical virtuosity, the result will be an event that is allowed to demonstrate the totality of its intrinsic characteristics.

This argument runs the risk of advocating for doing nothing; but that is not the point of Pisaro's composition. The performer indeed acts and has agency in the event, but they are not the only thing happening. The typical formulation of technical virtuosity maintains that if the performer does not will it, it does not happen. The experimental approach takes the opposite approach maintaining that many other factors have agency during a performance.

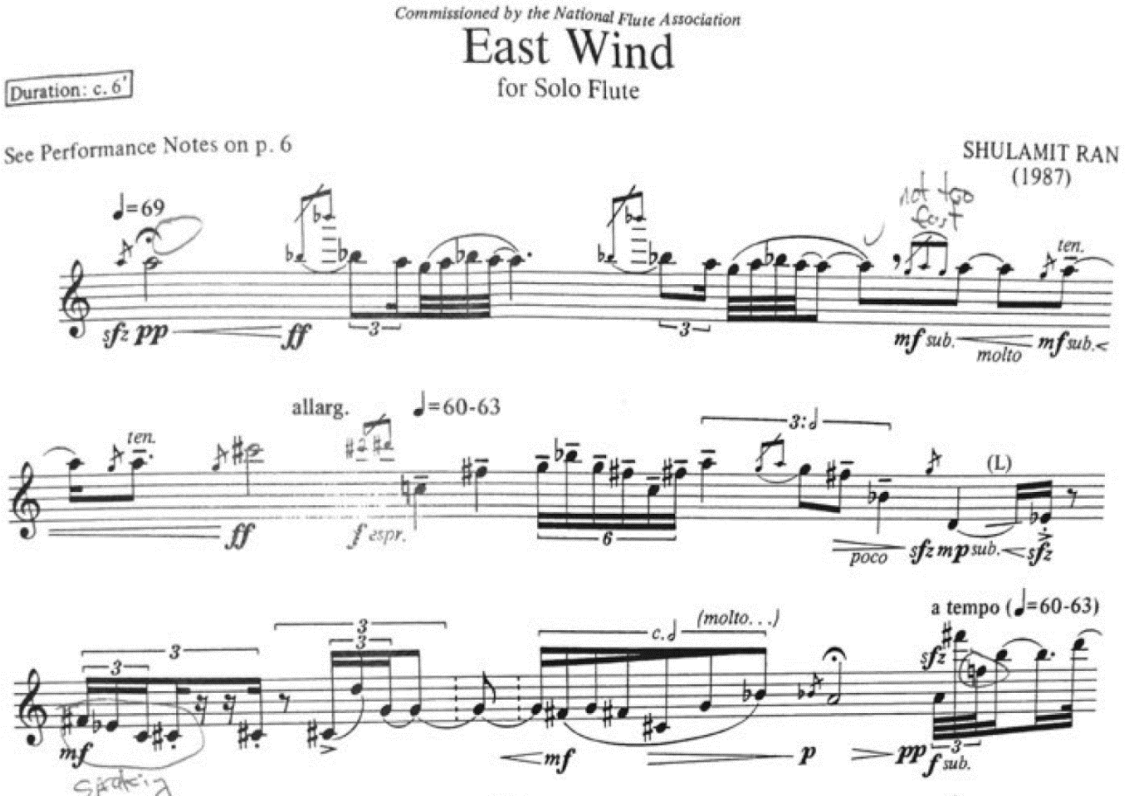

Figure 6.9: *East Wind* by Shulamit Ran, page 1

The notation and spatialized layout further underscore Ran's open-minded attitude. The marked *allargando* on the second line does not specify how much to slow down and it seems to pertain only to a sustained note so the tempo change avoids immediate perception–how is it different from notating a fermata? The note spacing of this sustained note is also a bit larger than seems typical in other parts of the notation. Ran is allowing for immanent decisions by the performer based on their personal tastes, environmental factors, and other variables. By avoiding perception of the notation by the listener (notating *allargando* on a held note), she is allowing the decisions of the performer and the perspective of the audience to comingle in the event. Each will hear this note differently but all versions are welcome.

The aleatoric beaming toward the end of the third line occurs through the piece and provides further evidence of Ran's desire to accept multiple concurrent interpretations. The performer sees the notation but does the audience hear it the same way? She also does not notate bar lines except for a few exceptions and for a few passages in which she indicates which notes should be felt as the downbeat. This suspends the audience perception of rhythm while giving the performer an organizational system in which to establish an interpretation. This technique allows for the mindset of the soloist and a (perhaps) contrasting hearing by the audience to coexist.

To view *East Wind* through the lens of *within (1)* reveals a paradoxical ontology in which the performer is both active and unimportant–that is, no more important than anything else happening. Considering solo flute music from an experimental perspective opens onto a pedagogy of creativity–a process through which the performer can discover new skills and modes of perception. By deskilling this genre through his prose directions, Pisaro gives the flutist a medium through which to explore this "middle way" of thinking between the seemingly conflicting ideas of performing solo music. By reskilling her flute solo with her opening instructions, Ran provides new ways of thinking about the seemingly contradictory relationships among performer, audience, composer, and event.

CHAPTER 7

MUSIC: TEACHING

Throughout this document I have used experimental music to discuss a process-oriented epistemology in pursuit of a thinking about pedagogy grounded in what Eleni Ikoniaduo calls the "middle way" of perception. I located a problem in my own experience as the seeming bifurcation of ideals in classical music. My desire for resolution of these conflicts was revealed to be a catalyst for thought towards an ontology of music that moves beyond my initial perception of a surface-level paradox. This project resonates with what Tinkle calls the "skill/deskill dialectic": a movement in experimental music from unfettered dissolution of hierarchy to a desire for participation-driven learning–from "deskilling to reskilling."[83] Both processes mingle together and overlap one another creating a pedagogy in which its practitioners engage in both learning and unlearning simultaneously. Ikoniaduo's "middle way" philosophy accounts for seemingly conflicting objects of our perception. She calls it "rhythmic" invoking the term as a metaphor because rhythm must account for both the perceived pulses and the unperceived space between the pulses that make up its character.[84] Thinking music through this middle way becomes an experimental pedagogy in which neither teachers nor students have definitive answers but nevertheless engage in the search for them. As Cage said about his composition classes at the New

[83] Tinkle, "Experimental Music with Young Novices."
[84] Ikoniadou, *The Rhythmic Event: Art, Media, and the Sonic*.

School, quoted by Fetterman, "The principle of my teaching was not to teach… I wasn't transmitting information, I was trying to encourage the students to find their own way of doing things."[85]

Utilizing writings and interviews by experimental musicians–mostly collected by Jennie Gottschalk and Joe Panzner–I discussed experimental music values including indeterminacy, change, non-subjectivity, research, experience[86], and virtuality.[87] I located these ideals in writings about teaching non-musicians–that is, individuals who have not (yet) received formalized training in Western art music traditions. The principles discussed by these writings have clear parallels in the field of highly-trained classical music so I endeavored in the second part of this document to uncover common ground between the aesthetics of Western art music and experimental music. Indeed many writers discussed in this document contend that trained musicians can benefit from experimental practice.[88] In the third part of the document I demonstrated four examples of practically applying experimental modes of thought towards classical music.

I end by engaging the title argument of this document once more. A view of classical music training through the lens of experimental music practice reveals a perhaps atypical pedagogy of creativity. As Tinkle says, experimentalists "[suggest] that they practice a pedagogy which denies pedagogy itself."[89] Pedagogy is part of, as Joe Panzner titles his book, "The Process that is the World" that values an "always-

[85] Fetterman, *John Cage's Theatre Pieces : Notations and Performances*.
[86] Gottschalk, *Experimental Music Since 1970*.
[87] Panzner, *The Process That Is the World*.
[88] See: Turino, *Music as Social Life : The Politics of Participation*. Tinkle, *The Expanding Universal*. Landy, *Experimental Music Notebooks*.
[89] Tinkle, "The Expanding Universal."

already…becoming."[90] This conception of a pedagogy of creativity unhitches the term from its connotations of goal-oriented work and teacher-to-student interactions. What is left is a non-methodical methodology–a liquid syllabus–an immanent procedure of grasping at answers which only lead to more questions. It is a "moving target to be tracked experimentally."[91] In this way, practicing experimental music can open upon a pedagogy of creativity that could be as useful for trained musicians and higher education music students as it is for non-musicians.

[90] Panzner, *The Process That Is the World*.
[91] Panzner.

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